

arcade express

THE BI-WEEKLY ELECTRONIC GAMES NEWSLETTER

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TI PLANS TO CONTROL SOFTWARE FOR 99/4A

Texas Instruments wants to keep control of all software for the TI-994A computer, and plans to do this by using electronic circuitry known as GROM (graphics read only memory). TI is altering the computer so that cartridges without GROM won't work. As the next step to keep other companies from selling games for the computer, TI refuses to license the GROM technology to any other manufacturers. Texas Instruments spokesmen say there's only one way around this - that is for those persons who want to sell programs for the 99-4A to give TI the program rights. The company promises to pay the program authors a royalty on any such designs. At least two companies, Milton Bradley and Walt Disney Productions, have agreed to this arrangement.

Meanwhile, Texas Instruments is expecting a loss of about \$50 million in pre-tax profit during the first quarter of 1983, due to the recently discovered flaw in the 99-4A computer. The company is starting a voluntary program to correct potentially faulty power transformers that can cause a shock to the user or damage to the computer. TI will supply an adaptor without charge to all computer owners, as well as correcting all units now in inventory. TI-99-4A computer owners can call a toll-free number (800-527-3550) to request their free adaptor.

THE GIANTS LAY DOWN THEIR SWORDS: COLECO & ATARI SETTLE THEIR DISPUTE

Warner Communications and Coleco Industries agreed to settle their differences out of court, thus halting the suit between these gaming giants. Under the agreement, Coleco will pay royalties to Atari on the expansion module permitting ColecoVision owners to play VCS cartridges, and on the new Gemini videogame unit (an Atari work-alike). Atari had sued Coleco for \$350 million, only to be countersued by Coleco for \$500 million for alleged antitrust violations.

The two companies agreed to the settlement rather than proceeding with a lengthy court battle that some observers think couldn't have been resolved until long after the units in question had been technologically surpassed.

The two giants deserve compliments for stopping this bitter battle that caused many gamers and retailers to be concerned for the welfare of our hobby.

MINI-COMPUTER GOES MINI-PRICE

Timex Corp. has lowered the price of the Timex Sinclair Model 1000 to \$55, including a \$15 rebate. The new retail price is \$69.95, and the rebate continues until the end of April. This makes this tiny unit the least expensive computer currently marketed in America.

Analysts estimate that about 600,000 units of the TS1000 were sold in 1982, and expect sales to total about 1.4 million this year.

TEENS SPEND MEGABUCKS

U.S. teens spent \$44 billion in 1982 according to the Rand Youth Poll. This is up from \$42.6 billion in 1981. Teen spending has uninterruptedly increased for the past three decades according to Lester Rand, president of Rand Youth Poll.

'MEGADON' BOASTS 255 SKILL LEVELS

A nearly limitless number of maze-playfields and a constantly rising difficulty are hallmarks of "Megadon", a coin-op maze shoot-out created by Photar Industries.

Players use joystick and fire button in combination to steer the Megadon through the maze on its search and destroy mission against the Cosmic Infidels(!). If your ion bomb fails to hit the target, however, it bounces around the screen until it finally explodes by colliding with an Infidel, the purple lines or the Megadon fighter itself. While carrying the attack to the enemy, the Megadon fighter must avoid contact with the Cosmic Infidels, deadly purple lines, baby Ergs (which are both destructive and indestructible) and the Terrible Ergs. Unlike the Cosmic Infidels, which a single ion blast will atomize, the Ergs take at least two and sometimes more. A diminishing fuel supply adds urgency, making it mandatory for arcaders to get through each labyrinth as quickly as possible.

FOR A GOOD TIME CALL ROOM SERVICE

You'll probably have a better time on your next trip if you stay in a hotel with In-Room Video Games. This is a new service for hotel and motel chains around the

country. When a hotel signs on, ColecoVision game units are provided to rent for \$5 or \$10 per night. Software is available at a small extra rental fee. Arnold Ruff, spokesman for In-Room Video Games says that over 800 units were placed in March alone. Some of the chains that signed on for the service include Radisson Corp., Rodeway, Days End, Best Western, Americana, and some Hilton and Sheraton hotels.

If you think this is a good idea, ask for the service the next time you check into a hotel. Then if they don't have it, suggest they call Arnold Ruff at 408-559-4811 for more details.

BENJI TURNS TEACHER

Education is going to the dogs, at least if ISA Software has anything to do with it. ISA Software and

Mulberry Square Productions are featuring smart-dog Benji, the lovable movie-mutt, as the leading character in a new series of educational videogames. Each has Benji employing knowledge of a particular subject in order to win the contest. The entertainments are designed to stress science, astronomy, and other brainy topics that can be appreciated by man and dog alike. According to Herzl Hyton, president of ISA, "For the first time we are combining all the fun, action and adventure found in sophisticated videogames with important educational lessons - teaching each player in a way that makes learning fun and easy."

ALIEN GROUP HAS SPEECH SYNTHESIZER

The announcement might sound like something out of science fiction, but it's true. "The Voice Box II", the newest product from The Alien Group, allows owners

of Atari computers to synthesize speech at a moderate price. The peripheral, which requires 32K memory and disk drive, gives the computer the ability to speak with inflection, capability for foreign-language input and speech, a singing voice with three part music, and programmable musical effects (such as vibrato). For more information, contact The Alien Group, 27 West 23rd St., New York, NY 10010.

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NEW KEYBOARD FOR
RADIO SHACK COMPUTERS

Mark Data Products' "Super-Pro" replacement keyboard kit is for TDP-100 and all the Radio Shack Color Computers. It comes in a do-it-yourself kit for \$70, is fully compatible, and has the same layout as the Radio Shack keyboards. An additional plug adaptor at \$5 is required for computers made after October '82.

SIERRA GOES ON LINE
WITH SUNNYSIDE SOFT

Sierra On-Line has acquired the product line originally developed by Sunnyside Soft. Ken Williams, president and founder of Sierra On-Line, commented on the acquisition, predicting they would "fit in very nicely with our plans to enter the home educational software market." The three educational programs developed by Sunnyside Soft are "Bop-A-Bet", "Dragon's Keep" and "Troll's Tale", all aimed at elementary students.

There's lots more excitement at Sierra On-Line, since "The Dark Crystal" moved from the silver screen to the video playfield in a new hi-res adventure for the Apple. The game, which follows the movie's plot fairly closely, requires you to find a piece of the Great Crystal and restore it to save the world. A second adventure from Sierra, "Ultima II", allows players to generate their own characters in modified role-playing style. The two-disk Apple game lets players create male or female elves, dwarfs, men or hobbits who operate as clerics, fighters, wizards or thieves.

Sierra hasn't forgotten Atari owners. The famous two-stage space adventure "Marauder", originally available for Apple, is now available on disk for the Atari 4-8-1200 computers, and "Ultima II" will soon be completed in Atari and IBM PC versions.

EPYX GETS NEW PREXY;
NEW MOUTHPIECE; NEW GAMES

Michael Katz has accepted the position of president and chief executive officer of Epyx/Automated Simulations. Epyx manufactures computer games for the Atari, Commodore, TRS, Apple and IBM personal computers, with a line of over 30 titles including hit games "Temple of Apshai" and "Star Warriors". Katz, well known in the electronic gaming industry because of his key role at Coleco where he functioned as that company's first marketing vice president, participated in Coleco's phenomenal growth during 1982. Previously Katz was marketing director at Mattel, where he was largely responsible for Mattel's successful entry into the handheld electronic gaming field.

Epyx is a company on the move. One of Katz' first official acts was to appoint Chiat/Day, Inc. as its advertising agency of record. The company plans a major media effort during the last half of 1983.

The newest releases from Epyx include "Jumpman", a climbing science fiction game requiring the arcader to infiltrate obstacle-filled mazes on 30 levels. "Oil Barons" is a strategy game for one to eight players who each compete to become oilmen, struggling against government regulations, taxes, fires and even hurricanes. "New World" allows up to three players to lead expeditions to the newly discovered Americas, for conquest and colonization in the year 1495.

FIRST STAR ON THE RISE

Fernando Herrera, winner of the first Atari Star Award for "My First Alphabet", has teamed with New York film producers Bill Blake and Richard Spitalny to form First Star Software, Inc. The company just released "Astro Chase" for Atari computers, and will design the games in the upcoming films "Arcade" and "Future Gold". First Star Software is the first company offering a consulting service, to look for potential videogames in film scripts. After all, notes Blake, "If a studio's film fails, they still have the game!"

DONKEY KONG TOPS LIST IN E.C. POPULARITY POLL

"Donkey Kong" topped the list this month in the Electronic Games popularity poll, replacing "Pitfall", the game that held the first-place position

for so many months. ColecoVision cartridges filled four out of the top five places in the hit-game sweepstakes. Meanwhile, "Star Raiders" continues to hold the top spot for computer games, and "Donkey Kong" is hanging onto first place in the coin-op division.

POSITION	THIS MONTH	LAST MONTH	GAME	SYSTEM	MANUFACTURER
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MOST POPULAR VIDEOGAME CARTRIDGE:

# 1	# 2	Donkey Kong	ColecoVision	Coleco
2	4	Zaxxon	ColecoVision	Coleco
3	3	Lady Bug	ColecoVision	Coleco
4	-	Advanced Dungeons & Dragons	Intellivision	Mattel
5	6	Venture	ColecoVision	Coleco
6	1	Pitfall	Atari 2600	Activision
7	5	River Raid	Atari 2600	Activision
8	9	Turbo	ColecoVision	Coleco
9	-	Defender	Atari 2600	Atari
10	-	Frogger	Atari 2600	Parker
11	-	Tron Deadly Discs	Intellivision	Mattel
12	13	Vanguard	Atari 2600	Atari
13	-	Demon Attack	Atari 2600	Imagic
14	15	Megamania	Atari 2600	Activision
15	-	Berzerk	Atari 2600	Atari

MOST POPULAR COMPUTER GAME:

# 1	# 1	Star Raiders	Atari	Atari
2	2	Pac-Man	Atari	Atari
3	3	Centipede	Atari	Atari
4	4	Castle Wolfenstein	Apple/Atari	Muse
5	-	Preppie!	Atari	Adventure Int.
6	-	Miner 2049er	Various	Various
7	10	Wizardry	Apple	Sir-Tech
8	-	Caverns of Mars	Atari	Atari
9	-	Choplifter	Apple/Atari	Broderbund
10	6	Omega Race	VIC-20	Commodore

MOST POPULAR COIN-OP VIDEOGAME:

# 1	# 1	Donkey Kong	Nintendo
2	6	Tron	Midway
3	7	Donkey Kong, Jr.	Nintendo
4	3	Zaxxon	Sega
5	5	Ms. Pac-Man	Midway
6	4	Dig-Dug	Atari
7	-	Q*Bert	Gottlieb
8	-	Centipede	Atari
9	9	Tempest	Atari
10	-	Tutankham	Stern

DON'T FORGET TO VOTE

Clip and mail the EG popularity poll ballot from the current issue, so that your votes can be counted in the next listing of top hits. Remember, if you don't vote, no one will ever know what your favorite games are!

MONACO IS SITE FOR CAMES CONGRESS February 21-24, 1984, and Monte Carlo, Monaco, are the date and place for Leisuretronics, a multi-national event billed as "The International Congress and Exhibition for the Electronic Gaming Industry". The gathering is intended to bring together representatives of manufacturers, retailers and other gaming companies from the U.S., Japan, Britain and the rest of the world to discuss common problems and opportunities. The 4-day Technical and Management Congress and Trade Exhibition will be held at the Congress Center, Hall de Centenaire and Winter Sporting Club in Monte Carlo.

Leisuretronics is organized and managed by three Executive Directors -- Robert DeStefano (U.S.), Ian Smith (U.K.) and Eddie Y. Kamijo (Japan) -- with official representatives in Egypt, Sweden, Finland, Malta, France, Italy, Singapore, Australia, Spain, Hong Kong, Thailand, West Germany and Brazil.

"The status and importance of electronic games now justify a major international congress and exhibition representing the goals and interests of this major industry," says a communique from the three-headed leadership. "As a result of the support and encouragement we have received throughout the industry and from contacts in specific fields that stand to benefit from electronic game technology, we believe that Leisuretronics will be a successful venture for all participants."

Leisuretronics will be a strictly industry event, not open to the general gaming public. There is no question, however, that if it successfully establishes a climate of international cooperation, consumers in all nations could ultimately benefit from a greater interchange of product and creativity among electronic gaming countries.

CBS EXPANDING R&D FACILITIES CBS is showing the rest of the gaming world that it is serious about becoming a publishing force in the videogame and computer game software fields. The company is presently outfitting a major expansion of the Greenwich, Conn., complex that houses its research and development efforts on behalf of both CBS Videogames and CBS Software. When construction is completed, designers and their support teams will have about twice as much space in which to work their magic.

PINBALL WIZARDS CAN FLY HIGH WITH THE IBM "Night Mission", the popular computer pinball game, is now available for the IBM Personal Computer. The SubLogic game requires a color monitor, the color/graphics Adapter, and disk drive. A spokesman for the company describes it as "so real you can actually tilt the computer you're playing on." The playfield has 5 bumpers, 7 targets, 9 rollovers, and more features that add excitement to the play. The theme is a WWII night bombing run. Up to four balls can be played simultaneously, at 10 modes of play ranging from easy to high speed.

NINTENDO CRAMS MULTI-SCREEN FUN INTO SMALL PACKAGES Two new multi-screen versions of Nintendo's Came & Watch handhelds have been added to the company's extensive line of electronic games.

In "Mario Brothers", Donkey Kong's famous foe and the little carpenter's brother Luigi are hard at work in a bottling plant, racing around the screen in an effort to keep bottles from breaking. "Donkey Kong II" is a handheld variation of the successful "Donkey Kong Junior" coin-op, featuring two levels of obstacles in the palm of your hand.

THORN HUNTS A FEW GOOD GAMES Thorn EMI wants to buy marketing rights for original computer games. Think you've programmed a hit? Contact Thorn EMI Home Video, HCE Development, 1370 Avenue of Americas, New York, NY 10019.

THE HOTSEAT

Reviews of New Products

RATINGS: 10 - Pure gold and about as good as a game could be. A rare rating.

9 - An outstanding, state-of-the-art game.

8 - A very good to excellent game.

7 - A good game.

6 - Better than average, but maybe not for everyone.

5 - An average game that does what it promises.

1-4 - The item has serious flaws.

KEY: The information heading each review follows the same simple format. First is the name of the item, then its classification, and, if it's a home arcade software program, the system/s with which it is compatible. Finally, there's the manufacturer's name.

CRITICS: AK-Arnie Katz; TF-Tracie Forman; JW-Joyce Worley

THE MISSING RING/Computer Came (Apple II)/Datamost

This quest for a wizard's missing ancient ring contains many elements which have made non-electronic role-playing games so popular. The emphasis here is on multi-character parties with each adventurer independently controlled by one of the human gamesters up to a limit of five. Each such character is movable independently of the others in the group, opening up a slew of play possibilities not available in other games. The downside is that the designer had to sharply curtail other aspects of the game, such as the equipping of individual heroes, in order to stress this aspect. Terry Romine has done a creditable job, though faster order execution would have been appreciated. "The Missing Ring" introduces a workable game-system that ought to be used again with adjustments as the basis of future adventure games from Datamost. Rating: 8 (AK)

CROSS FORCE/Videogame Cartridge (for Atari VCS)/SpectraVision

Although its graphics are simple by current state-of-the-art standards for the Atari 2600, what this game lacks in fine detail is more than made up for by its lightning-fast play action and plain old challenge. Trap enemies in the crossfire between your two Spectron weapons, which move horizontally, either in diagonally opposite directions, or vertically parallel, depending on the game option. Rating: 8 (TF)

PAC-MAN PLUS/Coin-Op Came/Bally-Midway

The first legal enhancement of the classic arcade game, this coin-op features all the graphics, challenge and excitement of the original while eliminating patterned play. Random movement plus a few surprises combine to make this an interesting new twist for Pac-fans. Rating: 8 (TF)

SUPER PAC-MAN/Coin-Op Came/Bally-Midway

This newly-designed maze features keys, locked doors, and Super Energy Dots, making it the latest thrill for gobbler-lovers. After eating a Super Dot, Pac-Man grows to mammoth proportions and is invulnerable to the maze monsters. Press the Super-Speed button, and the giant muncher really moves! Rating: 8 (TF)

FLASH GORDON/Videogame Cartridge (for Atari VCS)/20th Century Fox Videogames

This dual-screen maze shoot-out features some of the best graphics, play mechanics, and non-stop action ever seen for the Atari 2600 system. Patrol the corridor tunnels of Spider City, searching out and destroying the spiders' Hatching Pods, while rescuing any wandering spacemen who cross your path. Rating: 9 (TF)

BEDLAM/Videogame Cartridge (Vectrex)/GCE

This fantasy adventure keeps the arcader spinning as he tries to stop the aliens plunging toward the center from the edges of the screen. Aliens are seeking to conquer this galaxy. Approaching from every side, they move straight toward the gamer's ship. The joystick rotates the cannon, and a special zapper clears the screen of all enemies. But you can only use this super weapon once on each level, so don't waste it! Clear one section of baddies only to face another with still more deadly attackers. "Bedlam" turns "Tempest" inside out, in a stunning challenge that shows the Vectrex off to best advantage. Rating: 8 (JW)

ARMOR ATTACK/Videogame Cartridge (Vectrex)/GCE

You're trapped behind enemy lines, caught in the center of an occupied city. You must maneuver your jeep through the streets. Try to hide from enemy tanks patrolling the area, then attack from the shadows when you get your chance. But you can't hide from the helicopter that periodically flies over. It takes careful aim to bring down the whirlybird before it gets your jeep. This credible version of the Cinematronics coin-op proves that you don't have to go to space for a good combat game! "Armor Attack" is easy enough for a beginner, but progressive difficulty levels make the game tough enough for the most seasoned arcader. Rating: 8 (JW)

A.E./Computer Game (for Apple II)/Broderbund

The swirling flightpaths of the attackers as they zoom hither and yon around the eight playscreens is the principal feature that distinguishes "A.E." from the usual run of invasion games. The arcader employs a cannon, located at the bottom of the playfield, to blast runaway maintenance robots before they can clean the Earth to death. The player must push these metal marauders back playfield by playfield, off the surface of the planet and into deepest space to save the day. The rendering of the fields is reasonably good linework, though these backgrounds actually have very little measurable effect on actual play. "A.E.", however, clearly lives or dies on the basis of the aerial acrobatics the attackers perform as they try to bomb the cannon into oblivion. "A.E." successfully straddles the line between being hard and being too difficult for the average player. Though the play-action is straight-forward and free of needless complications, "A.E." is unlikely to be merely played a few times and then consigned to the storage file. Rating: 8 (AK)

TRANSYLVANIA/Computer Game (for Apple II)/Penguin Software

Locating and then rescuing a damsel in distress is the main object in this illustrated adventure designed by Antonio Antiochia and programmed by him, Mark Pelczarski and Dave Alberts. This remarkably beautiful piece of software stakes a serious claim on behalf of Antiochia to the title of king of the computer artists. The program generates the pictures which accompany the brief text descriptions in "Transylvania" with great rapidity, and the drawings are far above the current quality norm. The quest itself should prove entertaining to lovers of this type of contest, but the illustrations are absolutely certain to leave everyone gasping in admiration. Rating: 8 (AK)

MERRY-GO-ROUND:

OLD FACES: NEW PLACES

Robert Gardner is the new Vice President of Marketing for STARPATH, and will oversee all sales functions, promotion, p.r., and research. He formerly

was with Wham-O, and participated in such successfully marketed devices as the Frisbee and the Hula Hoop...Also new at STARPATH is Bonnie Pettengill, who's on-deck as advertising and creative supervisor. Bonnie was previously media director for The Record Factory...Harvey Gillis is the new chief financial officer for ACTIVISION, and will be responsible for all financial operations and planning for the company. He was formerly with the World Banking Group of Seafirst Corp...Magnetic Tape International, the firm marketing a line of products under the ZIMAG brand, has new sales managers. Joel Abrams, formerly with Sharp Electronics, is national sales manager of computer products, and Dick Moe, formerly of Wham-O, is national sales manager of video-games...Robert Strickland is the new Vice President of Sales for ODYSSEY. Bob has been with Magnavox since 1977...Gene Portwood is the new Director of Creative Development for BRODERBUND SOFTWARE. He will supervise the internal programming staff, contribute game ideas, critique games, and teach programmers tricks of animation...TRONIX PUBLISHING also has a new Director of Marketing, J. Merrick Taggart. He'll manage all marketing functions and strategic planning for this computer software company...THE GAMES NETWORK has a trilogy of new execs. Steve Klein is the Executive Vice President of Research & Development, and Barry Megdal is Vice President of Engineering. These two are often credited with the technology allowing subscribers to play games over cable t.v. systems. Also at The Games Network, Jim Summers is the new Vice President in charge of Program Acquisitions, and has thus far contracted over 1500 programs for use on the service...Ermanno Bruno is the new National Sales Manager for CREATIVE SOFTWARE. He most recently was with CBS/Pacific Stereo as District Manager, involved in sales management in Northern California.

VERY IMPORTANT NOTICE

Electronic Games Magazine has moved to a new location. The new address is: 460 West 34th Street,

New York, New York 10001. This is effective immediately. The new telephone number for Electronic Games is (212) 947-6500.

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